

WOMEN'S Christian Temperance Union Of New Zealand.

Organised 1885.

"For God and Home and Humanity."

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The White Ribbon. For God and Home and Humanity.

WELLINGTON, AUG. 19, 1918.

The Temperance forces are mustered, drilled and ready for a grand advance all along the line. We have started upon the last battle in the long campaign against the Licensed Liquor Trade. There will be two distinct stages of this fight. The first stage is the Petition, the second stage the Poll. Ere this reaches our readers they will already have received Petition Forms. This Petition is one praying Government to grant a Referendum upon the question of National Prohibition. This Petition must speak with no uncertain sound. It must be the largest petition ever presented to Parliament. It must contain so many signatures that it will compel the Government to recognise the fact that the people of this Dominion demand a Referendum, and will insist upon having one.

This demand is a reasonable one. In view of the condemnation pro-

nounced upon this trade by Statesmen, Admirals, Generals, Medical Experts, Business Men, and Social Reformers, surely it is a fair thing to ask that the people be allowed to express an opinion, at the ballot-box, as to whether this enemy within the gates shall be outlawed and banished; whether this foe to national efficiency shall be allowed to continue its deadly work.

General Joffre says: "Alcohol, by diminishing the moral and material strength of the Army, is a crime against national defence in the face of the enemy."

Colonel Nicholson, of U.S.A., says: "A soldier who gets drunk is only 40 per cent. efficient, and this country is not looking for men who are so low in efficiency."

In this Dominion an Efficiency Board, consisting of three keen and capable business men, was set up by the Government. After taking evidence from people of all shades of opinion, it expressed its conviction that for the sake of national efficiency the Liquor Trade should be closed down, that the importation, manufacture, and sale of intoxicating liquors should be prohibited. Their recommendation also allowed a reasonable compensation to the Trade, which they estimate will not be more than 4½ millions. The N.Z. Alliance and the W.C.T.U. have always held, and still maintain, that the Liquor Trade has neither legal nor moral right to compensation. But hard facts have to be faced, and the hardest fact of all is this, that if we could get an election before the end of this year, and secure a three-fifths majority against the Liquor Trade, then by an iniquitous law, this infamous and unpatriotic trade is allowed 4½ years to carry on its work of ruin and destruction in direct violation of the will of the people as expressed at the ballot-box. But we are hoping and expecting to see our boys home long before four years have expired. And we have resolved that they shall come back to a dry Dominion. Experience has shown how deadly is the open bar to the returned soldier. We know how wounded Canadian soldiers were driven mad by drink given in direct disobedience to medical orders, and we know how an indignant doctor said to the liquor-ridden authorities of England, "Don't be surprised if you lose Canada over this!" If our wounded boys, with their weakened bodies, and racked

nerves, came back to the temptations of the open bar, many of them will yield to its spell and forfeit all chances of recovery. The open bar means death to the wounded soldiers. Bearing in mind these facts, we say in this petition that we are willing to pay a commutation in money to get rid of the four years and to secure immediate prohibition on a bare majority.

The Liquor Trade costs our Dominion ten millions annually to take care of the moral, mental, and physical wrecks made by the drink trade, and from a financial standpoint it will pay us handsomely to get rid of it at the price named by the Efficiency Board. But when we consider the cost in human life, in tears and suffering of 4½ years extra trading, we say emphatically to the Liquor Trade: "You are holding us up like a highway robber, and saying, 'Your money or your life.' Well, sirs, take our money, but 'hands off' our boys and girls."

"Once to every man and nation comes the moment to decide
In the strife with truth and error for the good or evil side;
Some great cause, God's new Messiah, offering each the bloom or blight,
Parts the goats upon the left hand, the sheep upon the right,
And the choice goes on for ever, 'twixt the darkness and the light."

It is the age-long strife with evil; the repeatedly offered choice, "Christ or Barrabas."

The issue is clearly defined, "Boys or Dollars?" The brewer is working to save his dollars, the mothers to save their boys. Who is to win?

One word of caution to our workers. Don't under-estimate the enemy. We are started upon the stiffest battle of the long campaign. It must be a fight to a finish. We are not going to a warfare at our own charge. The battle is the Lord's, and he wins who fights with God.

"Careless seems the great avenger,
history pages but record
One death grapple in the darkness
'twixt false systems and the Word,
Truth for ever on the scaffold, wrong
for ever on the throne,
But that scaffold rules the future, and
behind the dim unknown
Standeth God within the shadow,
keeping watch above His own."